

PORTRAITS AND MINIATURES BY  
CHARLES WILLSON PEALE

CHARLES COLEMAN SELLERS

*Curator of Dickinsoniana, Dickinson College*

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ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

## TURNER, COL.

882. Peale wrote July 15, 1784 asking "Col. Turner" for 5 guineas. No painting is mentioned.

*Unlocated.*

## TURNER, SARAH.

883, 11. Peale's list of 1770-1775 work (*see p. 20*) contains an entry,

Miss Bordley 3/4 Miss Turner 3/4 10.10.0

Miss Turner was a member of the household of John Beale Bordley [*q.v.*], and both portraits must have been commissioned by him. Later, probably after Bordley's death in 1804, Miss Turner presented a miniature of him to the painter (*see [62, 405]*).

Her portrait, matching in size, style, and pose that of Bordley's sister [59, 10], makes it apparent that the likenesses of the two maiden ladies were hung together in his home. Miss Bordley's is graced by her mansion house in the background. In Miss Turner's, Peale has skillfully set the face for contrast against a very dark red curtain, with a brief glimpse of a "distance" at the left, both face and hands expressing the same dignified quietude.

After Miss Turner's death, the portrait was owned by Hester Ann Chase, unmarried daughter of Judge Jeremiah Townley Chase, and still hangs in the Chase House at Annapolis, now endowed as a home for elderly ladies.

Companion piece of [59, 10].

1770. Canvas, 30 × 24½. Half length. Dark brown hair. Blue eyes. Brown satin dress with white lace at neck and white undersleeves caught up with gold pins. Pale blue transparent scarf barred with gold. Necklace of white beads. Dark blue sash striped with gold. Background, at left a landscape, at center and right a dark red curtain.

*The Chase Home, Annapolis.*

## VALETTE, ELIE, FAMILY.

884, 67. Elie Valette, Register of the Prerogative Office of the province of Maryland, was born in 1734, and his son, of the same name, in 1762. A grandson, A. F. DeLavalette—the later form of the surname—became an officer of the Navy, gaining his first distinction under Decatur at Tripoli.

Peale's group portrait of the Valette family was painted in the forepart of 1774, and commemorates the publication of Elie Valette's book, *The Deputy Commissary's Guide within the Province of Maryland . . .*, Annapolis, 1774. On May 28 of that year the painter wrote from Williamsburg, politely requesting payment for the piece, thirty-six guineas. Returning to Annapolis, he took a sterner tone in the matter, only to find himself worsted in the duel that followed. Three successive issues of the weekly *Maryland Gazette*, Sept.

6, 13 and 22, contain the following blasts and counter-blast:

If a certain E. V. does not immediately pay for his family picture, his name shall be published full length in the next paper.

CHARLES PEALE.

MR. ELIE VALETTE, PAY ME FOR PAINTING YOUR FAMILY PICTURE.

CHARLES PEALE.

MR. CHARLES WILSON PEALE, ALIAS CHARLES PEALE—YES, YOU SHALL BE PAID; BUT NOT BEFORE YOU HAVE LEARNED TO BE LESS INSOLENT.

ELIE VALETTE.

The account was duly settled, about a year later, before Peale's removal from Annapolis to Philadelphia. Yet the virulence of the exchange, with the fact that Peale allowed many other debts owed him to wait for months and even years on the convenience of the debtor, very strongly suggests some disagreement or dissatisfaction stemming from the picture itself. The piece, with its small, full length figures, is most delicately and charmingly painted, save for certain slight but obvious disproportions, particularly between the head and body of the principal figure. Peale was not used to working in such small scale—indeed, the picture is unique in his early work in this respect—and he may thus have fallen into the error. Or, since he always showed himself ready to acknowledge and correct mistakes, it may have been that the bad drawing was introduced on some insistence of the family, perhaps that he paint for Mr. Valette a larger and more clearly recognizable head. In such a situation, Stuart would have cast the whole work aside, but Peale, with contrasting humility, would have done his best to please and satisfy.

As a whole, the composition is harmonious, the figures gracefully posed, with a pleasant little dramatic byplay introduced, as Elie, Junior, stands in rapt attention listening to the ticking of his father's watch. The whole air of the piece is natural, and its setting gives us a rare and vivid glimpse into an eighteenth-century Maryland home.

1774. Canvas, 30½ × 38½. Full length. *Elie Valette*: Powdered hair. Brown eyes. Dark blue suit with gilt buttons. *Elie, Jr.*: Brown hair and eyes. Olive-green suit with red collar and black cravat. Gold watch on silver chain. *Daughter*: Pale lilac dress. Holds black hat with white feather trim, gold button and cord. *Mrs. Valette*: Brown hair and eyes. Pearls and pink flowers in hair. Light blue dress and overskirt. Underskirt of pink quilted silk. Table and chairs of mahogany. Chairs and sofa upholstered in red with brass nails. Carpet in tones of blue-green, green, and red. At left, on table, pewter inkstand with quill pen and papers, uppermost of which is the engraved title page of Elie Valette's book, "The/Deputy Commissary's/Guide." Books under table by globe, "COKE'S/INSTITUTES," "SWINBURN/ON/WILLS," "GODOLPHUS." Background, at left a window with view of garden and gold snuff box on sill, gray walls, at

right a door with brass hinges opened into a garden with arbors.

*Philip C. Coleman, Moylan, Penna.* (Desc.)

#### VAN BERCKEL, PIETER JOHAN.

885, 148. The Netherlands' first minister to the United States belonged, as did Spain's representative, Diego Gardoqui [*q.v.*], to a commercial family which had played a part in financing the Revolutionary government. He came of a substantial family, born in 1725, his father a burgomaster of Amsterdam and a director of the East India Company. He was in 1761 a member of the town council of Rotterdam and, twenty years later, became a burgomaster of that city. He sailed for America June 23, 1783, the day of the final ratification of the treaty of amity and commerce between his nation and the United States, and was officially received by Congress, at Princeton, on Oct. 31, the day, as it chanced, of the arrival of final news of the treaty of peace with Britain. Van Berckel had come with the expectation of spending the remainder of his life in the United States. He was accompanied by his son, who succeeded him in his official post in 1788. He moved from Philadelphia to New York about 1789, and thence in 1795 to Newark, where he died, Dec. 27, 1800.

Peale's portrait of Van Berckel must have been painted between his arrival late in Oct., 1783 and Oct. 13, 1784, when it appears in the list of his gallery. The picture is No. 157 in the catalogue of the sale of the gallery in 1854, wrongly identified as "J.B. Bordley." It was among the pictures bought by Thomas J. Bryan who gave the entire group in 1867 to the New-York Historical Society. Bryan, a discerning connoisseur, would have bought the picture on its artistic merit alone. It is a forceful and interesting characterization of the tight-lipped, strong-minded but amiable Dutchman who had just been welcomed to a position of great commercial importance in the affairs of the very young republic. It is clearly the best likeness of Van Berckel. A portrait by Sharples is in the Independence Hall collection. Another, painted in the Netherlands from a print, was presented to the U. S. Dept. of State at the time of the Washington Bicentennial and is reproduced in Goodwin, Katherine Calvert, "The First Dutch Diplomat in America," *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine* 66: 553, 1932.

c. 1783-1784. Canvas, 23¼ × 19½. Bust. (Museum) Gray-brown hair. Blue-gray eyes. Olive coat with gold embroidery. White embroidered waistcoat. Background olive-gray. Unfinished at corners.

*New-York Historical Society, New York, N. Y.*

VANDERHEYDEN, ARIANA. *See Jenings, Mrs. Edmund, Sr.*

#### VARNUM, JAMES MITCHELL.

Lawyer and soldier. 1748-1789. (*D.A.B.*)

Varnum was a New Englander, a capable officer of the Rhode Island Continentals and a close friend of Nathanael Greene [*q.v.*]. His manner was impressive, his conversation reinforced and enlivened by those oratorical flourishes and literary allusions that marked the well-educated man and the lawyer of his day—but did not always, however, excite the admiration of his less sophisticated compatriots. He took part in the Philadelphia campaigns and passed the winter at Valley Forge where, in Washington's estimation, his presence served well to maintain the spirit and vitality of the army. He resigned his commission in 1779 and was elected in the next year to the Continental Congress. His career in law was already a distinguished one at the time of his premature death, Jan. 10, 1789.

886. Peale's diary records a miniature of Varnum, begun at Valley Forge late in May, 1778. It is probably the original of his Museum portrait (*see below*).

*Unlocated.*

887, 294. There is no record of the Museum portrait of Varnum until the catalogue of 1813. It is not in the Museum Accession Book at the Historical Society of Penna., whose entries begin in 1805. The portrait was painted, therefore, between the issuance of the catalogue of 1795 and the year 1805—at least seven years after the subject's death. It was probably done in 1804, when Peale returned to painting after a long recess with his *Humboldt* [398] and *Sansom* [772, 290]. It is attributed to "C.W.P." in Rembrandt Peale's marked catalogue of the 1854 sale, and is, indeed, so thoroughly characteristic, that the original was probably his own work, the miniature listed above.

c. 1804. Canvas, 23¼ × 19¼. Bust. (Museum) Powdered hair. Blue eyes. Florid complexion. Uniform buff and blue with the one silver star of a brigadier on gold epaulettes. Background olive-green.

*Independence Hall Collection, Phila.*

#### VESPUCCI, AMERIGO.

Explorer. 1451-1512. (*E.B.*)

888. On Jan. 26, 1816, Peale wrote to Mrs. Joel Barlow that the task of copying for his Museum gallery the portraits of "noted voyagers" she had loaned him would be his winter's amusement. In the correspondence he only mentions portraits of Columbus and Vespucci, although Magellan and Cortez were also included (*see Columbus* [154]). He wrote to her again on March 12 that he was beginning the work, Vespucci first, "because it is the most faulty in the coloring, and the most difficult to make a decent picture of it. I flatter myself that I shall be able to make them interesting by a more natural tone of tints and better drawing—yet I shall strictly keep the character."



617, 66. Peale Family. 1773-1809. S., C.R.



884, 67. Elie Valette Family. 1774. C.R.